II

Among the fascinating Alberta names is that of Pincher Creek. In 1868 a party of prospectors were camped on the creek, and somehow mamaged to lose a pair of pinchers. Tools, in those days were of the greatest value, and the prospectos named the creek, Pincher, in honor of the lost pliers. Years later the pinchers were found by a party of police.

But Pincher is known in folktale for other things than lost tools. Pincher was the destination of one of the longest taxi rides in history. An English rancher named was in Vancouver one day and suddenly was overwhelmed by nostalgic thoughts of Pincher. He hailed a taxi, climbed in and said: "Pincher Creek. And step on it!" Although the distance from Vancouver to Pincher is some three hundred and fifty miles, the cab driver didn't argue. The bill was two hundred and fifty dollars, and later the rancher's receipt for the ride was picked up off the barroom floor. It is said that the rancher didn't care for the hat the taxi driver was wearing, and bought him a new one just as soon as they reached Pincher Creek!

Many Englishmen took up ranches in the Pincher district. Sometimes these English gentlemen had difficulty in understanding the ways of the west. One tale is often told about Sir F. F. Mackenzie. Mackenzie was quite unused to western ways, and one of his horse wranglers was continually offending him by his familiarity. On one occasion Mackenzie asked the wrangler, "How would you manage this?" and the wrangler replied, "Well, I'd do it this way. But you can do as you like!" Mackenzie shouted back, "Do as I like! Of course I'll do as I like. Who are you to tell me I can do as I like?" The wrangler never did understand how, or why, he had offended.

The people of the Pincher area also remember about the famous race horse "Ocealeo". His owner, Remi Beauvais, used to say that Ocealeo was "a sure winner, and one of the finest horses ever brought into this country, you bet say!" Unfortunately Ocealeo stumbled over a dog in the course of one of his races, and injured his knees so badly that he was never able to race again.

Sport has always been a keen interest at Pincher, and the first real polo on the continent was played in the area. E. M. Wilmot, a rancher, returned from a trip to England in 1886, bringing back with him the first real polo sticks and balls ever imported to North America. Polo has been played in keen earnest around Pincher ever since.

Possibly the life of the old days is best typified, however, by a little description of an old-timer roundup written by Mrs. C. Lynch-Staunton whose family is one of the real old-time families of Southern Alberta. Pincher, like High River, was one of the great ranching centers, and Mrs. Lynch-Staunton writes: "The old-time roundups have now passed into history, along with the much-maligned cowboys who have often been characterized as cut-throats, hard drinkers and desperadoes in general, when in truth, for generosity, big-heartedness and willingness to help anyone in trouble, there was none more whole-souled than the cowboy.

"Round-ups in this country in those early days were looked upon as the big events of the season. Usually the spring round-up began about the 24th of May. Stockmen and riders from all parts of the range joined together in an immense body and, after choosing a captain, loading up the mess wagon with grub, bedding, cooking utensils and sundries, pulled out for the South end of the ranges, where, after crossing the Kootenai River the different outfits set up camp. There might be five or six outfits in all, each with camp cook and tents, sufficient to accommodate all hands, and making quite a village of tents. A horse-herd corral was made of ropes and wagons set in a circle. The herders brought in the bunch in the morning, and each wrangler caught up the horses he would need for the day. This was hard work on both horses and men, and a

great time for 'breaking in' brones, which supplied tremendous fun to the onlookers, though no doubt each man had his turn. The riders were told off in all directions, so that the cattle were gathered in from every part. They were driven to the nearest corrals where the brands were separated. The cow-ponies were almost as clever at the work of 'cutting-out' as their riders. When a brand was spotted and the pony headed toward a certain animal, he needed no farther directing except the pressure of the rider's knees to drive the animal where it belonged. The different brands were held in separate bunches outside the main bunch, and admitted to the branding corrals separately. The branding was done with wonderful rapidity, as many as two thousand animals being handled in a day. Ropers on their ponies within the corral caught the calves by the hind legs, a turn of the rope was taken around the saddlehorn and the calf headed toward the side of the corral, where a couple of wrestlers, by a skilful twist, threw it on the ground with the side to be branded, up. The animal was turned back to the bunch by other riders, and the branded animals either turned loose or put in the stray herd to be taken back to their own range.

"As the cattle were gathered up the herd became so great that it was necessary to have night-herders constantly on the alert to keep any part of them from breaking away. Cattle are usually easy to hold unless disturbed or excited. Severe thunder and

lightning will sometimes frighten them, when they will begin "milling". Then the cowboy has his work cut out for him lest the panic spread and they "stampede", rushing blindly in their terror into deep gullies, or over vutbanks, when the loss may be very great. In such a case the herders can do nothing but follow, trying, by riding alongside to direct their course from the most serious dangers, and gradually rounding them up again; for it was madness to attempt to head them off; horse and rider would be trampled to death.

"The same routine of work would be carried on until all the rangesshad been thoroughly riden over, the calves all branded and the cattle placed on their respective ranges. The cowboy's life was a strenuous one while on the round-up; nothing but eat, sleep and ride, ride, ride from start to finish; but through it all he was the most happy-go-lucky individual living, always joking, or swaping yarns, or kidding someone who had a "bad actor" to wrangle with in the chilly morning, when bronos were especially inclined to buck and a rider might find himself "staking a claim" in a hurry.

"Horses were rounded up separately from the cattle, and the Horse Round-Up entailed much more strenuous riding, although they did not occur as regularly nor as frequently. At the time of the disastrous May snowstorm in 1903, the Horse Round-Up had just started in the South. Range horses, as well as riders were afflicted with snow-blindness, and heavy losses were sus-

tained by the animals falling over precipices. The Round-Up had to be abandoned."

It was in this general area that one of Alberta's most colorful characters lived for more than forty years. Kootenai Brown, who was named by his parents, John George Brown, and was rumored to be a son of Queen Victoria's John Brown of Scotland, first saw the Waterton Lakes in the late 1860's. He was in a hurry at the time since he was being chased by a party of hostile Indians, but he paused long enough to appreciate the beauty of the spot. He made a vow that he would return to Waterton Lakes to live just as soon as he shook off the Redskins. And he did return to establish a trading post at the "Dardanelles" between the middle and lower lakes. He brought with him a beautiful French half-breed girl as his wife; but not very long after they had arrived at Waterton, the wife died. Later Kootenai brought to his cabin a young squaw of the Cree tribe named Chee-Nee-Pay-Tha-Quo-Ka-Soon (Flash of Blue Lightning) who was his faithful wife until Brown's death in 1916.

There are many, many folktales about Kootenai Brown. He was said to be an Oxford graduate, and to have subsequently become army officer, convict, jailer, sailor, prospector, dispatch rider, interpreter, store-keeper, bufallo hunter, rancher,

cowpuncher, gamewarder, park superintendent, and other things. He was certainly one of the first white men to cross the Canadian plains by pack horse. He earned his name "Kootenaie" (afterwards changed to "Kootenai") as a result of his trading activities and masterful command of the language of the Kootenaie Indians.

He was a great tale-spinner and one of the stories he was fond of telling was the saga of the discovery of oil in the mountains. The tale has slightly different versions, but here's the way Kootenai told it in 1914 to Mr. D. E. Cameron, librarian at the University of Alberta. It seems that in 1876 Dr. Dawson of the Geological Survey, made a trip up to the Waterton Lakes and secured Kootenai as a guide through the wilderness. When leaving, Dawson asked Kootenai whether he had ever seen any indications of crude oil. Kootenai said he wouldn't know it if he saw it. Dawson then took a bottle, put a little grease and kerosene oil in it, shook it up and told Kootenai to smell the mixture. He asked Kootenai to let him know if in his travels among the mountains he ran across anything similar. Kootenai put the bottle on a shelf where it remained for a long time.

The Stoney Indians used to visit Waterton at regular intervals. One day when the Stoneys were there preparing for a hunt, Kootenai remembered the bottle of oil. He had the Indians look at it, smell it, and asked them to let him know if they discovered anything similar. Kootenai then left Waterton himself

to guide a party through the Kootenaei District in British Columbia, and the Indians went off on their hunt. Later, one Stoney Indian hunted up Kootenai Brown and his party in the mountains and showed Kootenai a bottle containing crude oil. He explained that he had found it not far from Waterton, up Cameron Creek, where, he said, there was a pool of the stuff. Kootenai took the bottke home, put it on a shelf and forgot about it.

Later still, he had a man working for him named Bill Aldridge. Aldridge was out cutting hay one day and suddenly reappeared at Kootenai's cabin to say that he'd have to go to Pincher Creek for oil. He had run out, and the mower was running too hot. Kootenai said that he was going to Pincher Creek himself and would bring back the oil. Aldridge then asked whether there was any oil on the place to tide him over that day. Kootenai at first said, "no". Then he remembered the old bottle still on the shelf. He brought it out and said, "Will this stuff do?"

Aldridge took out the dork and whiffed a big whiff. He looked startled and yelled, "where did you get that stuff?" He had apparently been an oil man down in Texas and knew what the bottle contained. Kootenai told him where the pool was, and Aldridge at once exclaimed, "I quit!"

Aldridge immediately moved up to the pool where he built a shack and for some years made his living by straining the oil

through a gunny sack and selling it to farmers. Finally the place was taken over by an oil company which drilled a well.

One morning, while the well was being drilled, Kootenai was having his breakfast. Suddenly he heard a horse galloping up the trail from the Lakes. He went out to meet the rider -- a man from the drilling rig. The man was very excited but managed to say, "You have to hitch up right away. Go to Pincher! We've struck a gusher! Get hold of the stock!"

The man was so excited he didn't even want Kootenai to finish his breakfast. Kootenai did finish, however, and while he was eating he was thinking that he'd like to see the gusher with his own eyes, so he saddled up and rode over to the derrick. When he came within sight of the well, he could see the crew were all standing around the derrick, almost paralyzed with excitement, and with their eyes "popping out of their heads so far as you could hang your hat on them!" In the middle of the circle the oil was coming out in great bursts -- "Whoosh!" right up to the top of the derrick. Then there'd be another great "Whoosh!" and another!

Kootenai didn't waste any time. He headed for Pincher Creek and fortune! But when he was nearing his own cabin he heard the sound of a rider coming along behind him. The man shouted to Kootenai to stop. The gusher had ceased to gush!

I am interested in some of the amendments to the tale that Kootenai told Mr. Cameron. Mr. J. Y. Card, son of the founder of the Mormon town of Cardston, told me that Mountain Bill (Bill Aldridge) had heard that there was oil in the mountains (presumably after he was told by Kootenai). So Bill and his son Oliver, then about thirteen years old, set off to find it. They took their bedding and the proverbial frying pan and coffee pot, and tramped through the thick timber. One noon camp, the old gentleman sent Oliver to the creek for a pail of water, while Bill built the fire. The boy shouted to his father, "Ah Dad! Come on down here and see this black water!"

Bill trudged down to the creek to see the oil seepage in the wallow where the bears had been covering themselves with the oil at the edge of the creek. Old Bill tasted it, felt it, and smelt it. Then he said, "My gosh, boy, that's <u>ile</u>!"

Bill then threw a log across the creek, catching the oil as it seeped into what is now Cameron Brook. This done, he returned with some gunny sacks, dropped them flat on the surface where the oil was floating on the water, then he wrung them out into a barrell. He boiled the oil to get the water out, and to thicken it. He took the oil to Cardston, some forty miles, and sold it for lubricating oil, cough medicine, sore-throat cure, sure-cure for pneumonia, and antiseptic gargle.

One time when Bill was returning from a trip to Cardston, he was taken very ill and was afraid he was going to die. He said to his boy, "Oliver, go to the jockey-boy and get me a bottle of <u>gin</u>! It is sure to kill or cure!" He took two swallows of straight crude, and was able to drive back to Waterton Lakes!

One time when I was visiting in Calgary, Dr. McNab of the Associate Clinic told me that he had a wonderful old man in the hospital I really should see. He took me to see Mr. A. F. Patrick, in his ninety-fourth year, who was rapidly recovering from a broken hip. Mr. Patrick had a whole regiment of beautiful nurses waiting on him, and standing around listening to his yarns and blarney. I managed to push into the circle and the first thing Mr. Patrick told me was his version of finding the oil.

Mr. Patrick's account went something like this: "Kootenai fell in with some Stoney Indians, and asked them about crude oil. 'What is that?' asked the Indians. So Kootenai half-filled up a cup with black-strap molasses, added kerosene, stirred the sticky mess and held it under their noses.

"'If you see anything oozing out of the ground that looks and smells like that, you hustle and tell me!' Shortly after, the Indians reported finding an oil spring, and Kootenai staked a claim, then he forgot all about it."

Sometime later Lafayette French (the same prospector who spent so much effort looking for the Lemon Mine) got hurt in the Waterton Lakes country and a squaw greased his wounds with a peculiar thin grease. French sniffed the scent of crude oil! A little later still, French ran into Patrick who had a ranch west of Calgary. French mentioned the accident and the salve. The two men hunted up the squaw and offered her rifle and ponies if she would lead them to the oil.

They set out in the spring of that year, and by fall the squaw was still leading them around in the mountains, "holding out" for the sake of the grub!

One morning French told the Indians that they were breaking camp . . . were going home. The squaw watched them go, but suddenly discovered that they had taken all the grub! She rode like fury and overtook the white men.

"You lied to us," said French. "We in end to go home!"

The squaw then said she would really lead them to the oil. Three days later they found it . . . saw a thin trickle of oil coming out at the foot of a spruce tree.

Patrick finally persuaded a British geologist at Calgary to come and inspect their discovery. The geologist got to within ten miles of the find and suddenly decided there couldn't be

oil in such geologic formations and refused to go the rest of the way.

Meanwhile, Bill Aldridge had discovered the oil and had set up a sort of little refinery on the spot, selling the oil as lighting fluid, and as medicine for man and beast.

Finally Mr. Patrick interested John Lineham and J. K. Leeson of Calgary in his old find. The Rocky Mountain Development Company was organized, and land purchased outright. A drilling outfit was purchased for seven-hundred dollars and taken over a specially constructed road to the oil seepage.

Drilling was started in November, 1901. After drilling for ten months, and reaching a depth of one-thousand and ten feet, the oil struck. Patrick estimates the well flowed three hundred barrels of crude a day. A small boom developed. "Oil City", as the place was called, was, for a short time, a flourishing community!

A rival company was organized: The Pincher Creek Oil and Development Company, and this organization got hold of adjoining territory. To reach its lease, however, the Pincher Creek outfit had to cross the Rocky Mountain Company's lease. "They shall not pass!" was the cry. And when the Pincher Creek outfit attempted to pass, one dark night the boys of the Rocky Company turned out with sticks, stones and guns to stop them. Wagons were broken up and harness cut to pieces.

The boom was soon over. The discovery well "petered out", just as Kootenai Brown said it did. And the whole enterprise was impractical because of the bad roads, and the distance away from refineries.

Mr. Patrick, however, is still going strong, and may at any time organize a new company to open up the Waterton oil field!

Kootenai was a noted pistol shot. Senator Dan Riley told me that one time he and his partner Lafayette French wanted to see Kootenai's horses, so they all walked down the path toward the lake, and Kootenai's corral. As they walked along two prairie chickens jumped into the trail and ran along ahead. Kootenai pulled his six-shooter and shot the birds while they were running -- first one, then the other; skooting their heads off. He was never seen without his gun, a Colt's .45.

Senator Riley also mentioned that the Brown house was spotlessly clean. Chee-Nee-Pay-Tha-Quo-Ka-Soon was apparently a fine housekeeper. The story of this good Indian woman is so closely bound up to that of Kootenai that it is impossible to tell about one without mentioning the other.

Early one spring morning -- nobody knows exactly when -- the Indian woman who became Mrs. Brown left her prairie home in Saskatchewan to accompany her people to the mountains. They were going to visit relatives at Babb, Montana, and trade

with a white man named Kootenai Brown. When the party reached Brown's place at Waterton, he was so fascinated by the pretty Cree maiden that he offered to trade five cayuses for her on the spot. The offer was accepted. A folktale relates that Brown also that day proved his shrewdness, for after giving the Indians some "firewater", he staged a pony race and won back his five cayuses.

Mrs. Brown's life with Kootenai was filled with romance and adventure. She was the envy of all the other Indian girls, because Kootenai kept her dressed in bright silks. He gave her many gifts of beads and rings, and always treated her with respect. His pet name for her was "Nitchimouse" which means "my good woman". He was the only one who could call her this pet name, and he saw to it that others called her"Mrs. Brown." She never attempted to speak English, for fear someone would make fun of her, but she could understand almost anything anyone said to her.

Only one time was she unhappy. That was when Kootenai brought home a white girl. Mrs. Brown would not stand for that. She waited until Kootenai and the girl had gone hunting, then she piled all the household goods into the wagon, hitched up the ponies and treked back to her relatives at Babb. Kootenai followed very soon. He wanted her to return, and finally, after promising that nothing like that would ever happen again, she agreed to go home.

She bore a deep love for Kootenai. When he was dying, he told her that if he could, he would return in the form of an eagle. Mrs. Brown waited eagerly for this to happen. Brown died in 1916, and sometime afterward the first airplane to come into that part of the mountains landed near Waterton. As Mrs. Brown saw the great bird skimming over the trees, she thought Kootenai had come back to her. She rushed over to a neighbor's place calling, "Kootenai! Kootenai! He come! He come!" Then she ran toward the machine. When she reached it she stroked it all over, murmuring "Kootenai, Kootenai . . ." They say she stayed by the machine all night long.

Kootenai is buried near Chief Mountain with his two wives. It is a fitting place for the sleep of a legendary figure; for Chief Mountain itself is rich in legends. It was here that the spirit of the Great West Wind had his home and in a fierce encounter with a hero of the East, hurled the great rocks which form a direct line for about forty miles eastward.